Friends RSVP Food Insecurity Project

The University of New Hampshire’s Carsey Institute’s research in 2014 indicates many New Hampshire communities lack access to affordable, healthful food both in inner cities and rural areas. The state recognized food insecurity as a pressing policy issue over the past decade. More than 13 percent of New Hampshire households were food insecure at the time of the survey. These households reported conditions such as worrying that food would run out before the household had money to buy more, not being able to afford to eat balanced meals, skipping or cutting the size of meals because of lack of money, and not eating for a whole day.

Food pantries and the state Food Bank meet the basic needs of these individuals through donations and partnerships with local food suppliers. However, food pantries receive limited deliveries and rarely receive fresh fruits and vegetables. The NH Food Bank works with local organizations to secure more than 25,000 pounds of produce through a combination of gleaning and community gardens. It is equally important to educate people about the importance of proper nutrition and how to purchase nutritious food on a budget. Friends RSVP volunteers support projects that cover every function related to providing better, more nutritious food to local residents in need.

What Friends RSVP Volunteers Do
Our volunteers work with partnering agencies to support community gardens and gleaning programs during our state’s short growing season. Food goes to local pantries. Needy families receive fresh, nutritious food to improve their health without added cost.
RSVP volunteers provide staffing of soup kitchens and emergency meal offerings for needy families in the Friends RSVP service area.
RSVP volunteers provide staffing to food pantries in the collection, packaging, and distribution of food and other needed items to needy families throughout the coverage area of the individual pantries.

Current efforts for which Friends RSVP is recruiting include:
1. Project management roles for our children’s backpack project at a local pantry, providing 29 backpacks each Friday to food insecure children at a local school
2. Gleaning next year during the growing season at a local farm and for the Merrimack Conservation District, which organizes the gleaning effort within the county
3. “On call” help to cover dates that the local soup kitchen has gaps in coverage
4. Assisting the NH Food Bank in delivering the “Cooking Matters” nutrition program for low-income families (locations vary; volunteers can sign up for one five-session class that fits their schedule)
5. Local food pantry seeking a Food Bank ordering coordinator to manage the entire process of ordering from the NH Food Bank for a busy pantry, which requires training and consistent availability, as well as management ability